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ABSTRACT

In describing the Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Major at Muskingum College (Ohio), this paper presents a model for small liberal arts colleges to consider in providing training for future early childhood professionals. This interdisciplinary early childhood major draws from departments typically found in many small liberal arts colleges, bringing together the resources and expertise from the departments of business and sociology as well as psychology and education to provide the collaborative foundational core and/or areas of specialization. The three areas of specialization in the program are child development research, human services preparation, and administration. The impact of the interdisciplinary major is described, as well as strategies for building inter- and intra-department support. Challenges the interdisciplinary major poses include the need to help students develop a cohesive identity as early childhood majors and incorporation of new faculty into the program. Some of the features that make this interdisciplinary major attractive for early childhood teacher educators include: (1) a valuable body of knowledge and expertise is available for students earning a degree in early childhood; (2) an interdisciplinary focus in early childhood uses existing faculty resources; (3) an area of specialization in addition to the core strengthens the major; and (4) areas of specialization which meet the individual student s needs and interests enhance student motivation and commitment. Core requirements, areas of specialization, and electives are listed in appendices. (Contains 11 references.) (ND)

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An Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Major

at a Four-year Liberal Arts College:

A Quest for Quality and Communication Among Departments

by

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The need for quality early childhood programs and the needs of families have been highlighted in recent years (Galinsky, Bond, & Friedman, 1993; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1989; Bornstein., 1989; Whitebrook, Howes, & Phillips, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Halpern, & Myers, 1985). The 1991 issuance of the final report of the National Commission on Children, "Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families," signaled increased national attention to early childhood. In addition, recent studies and writings emphasize the need for an interdisciplinary and collaborative focus in the training of professionals (NAEYC's Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines, 1994; National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, 1993; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986). Bullough and his colleagues (1992), challenge the traditional teacher education as training concept and propose a model suggesting university faculty work collaboratively among themselves and with preservice teachers to facilitate their mutual development and systematic inquiry for professional development that extends beyond preservice education.

Despite many attempts to improve teacher education and the quality of education for young children, the perception remains that early childhood education may be "only babysitting." We believe that the major we have designed is rigorous and has gained respect from our colleagues outside of education.

Background

Like many other colleges and universities, teacher certification at Muskingum College had been housed solely in the education department with minimal coursework required in the psychology department. The program fulfilled the minimal certification requirements for a "piggy-back" pre-kindergarten validation on an elementary education major with Grades 1-8 certification. This fulfilled Ohio's state department requirements. As was typical in many colleges, the psychology and education departments did not work together. An even larger gap existed between education and the sociology and business departments. However, we still believed that each department could provide a valuable body of knowledge that we considered vital for students earning a degree in early childhood. We believed that an interdisciplinary focus for early childhood which incorporated faculty resources and expertise from departments in addition to education was necessary for students who would be working in the 21st century. In recognition of the above, we designed an interdisciplinary early childhood major.

The Major

The Muskingum College Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Major has a core that includes course work in education, psychology, and sociology (see Appendix A). As of 1994, early childhood majors also must complete three noncredit trainings in First Aid, Recognition and Identification of Communicable Diseases, and Child Abuse Recognition and Prevention. Ohio's Department of Human Services requires

these trainings for anyone who works in a child care center. The completion of each six-hour training is noted on a student's transcript. In addition to the core, Early Childhood majors are required to select one of the three areas of specialization. We built three concentrations that most represented common career paths of early childhood professionals.

All students are required to fulfill a junior internship that is tailored to their area of specialization. Students also complete a capstone seminar which is generally the equivalent of a senior thesis in their area of specialization (see Appendix B). In addition, those students wishing to earn Pre-kindergarten and/or K-3 certification(s) are required to take additional course work as their electives for the major (see Appendix C). In other words, certification is optional.

The *Child Development Research Specialization* is recommended for those students wishing to pursue graduate school in Child Development. It includes course work that encourages research with young children or the systematic evaluation of the outcomes of early childhood programs. The *Human Services Preparation Specialization* provides those interested in social service agencies with preparation and experience through an internship in an agency (e.g., Children's Services). The *Administration Specialization* is recommended for students who want to go into child care management or those who want to own their own child care center. Students' internships may lead them to the evaluation of policies and practices of several child care centers or to work directly under the supervision of an administrator of a program in an apprenticeship.

Marketing

Appendix D displays the handout that the college Admissions Office gives all prospective students who are interesting in early childhood. This new major seems to be attracting outstanding students.

Impact of the Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Major

In general, students report great satisfaction with the program. They appreciate the opportunity to tailor the program to their individual needs. They also value the opportunity to work with young children early in their college careers. Most take the preschool practicum and work in the Muskingum College Center for Child Development in their first or second semester at the college. Another practicum experience with infants and toddlers follows in the next semester. The better students are hired for pay whether or not they are on college work-study. It is an honor to work with young children at our college.

Strategies for Inter- and Intra Department Support

Specific team building strategies and tactics were pivotal to bring the four departments of education, psychology, sociology, and business together for a shared vision of an early childhood major. The authors met and outlined the characteristics of high quality early childhood programs. NAEYC's 1994 guidelines, "*Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines for Basic and Advanced Programs* " were consulted to facilitate the process. Selected courses already taught in the

Education, Psychology, and Sociology departments formed the core. In these times of budgetary stewardship, it was essential to utilize existing courses as much as possible. Designing many new courses would not be feasible.

Education courses focus on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective teaching and learning. Psychology courses provide the skills of observation, quantification, knowledge of child development theory, and interpretation of research. This department also houses a child care center that includes programs for preschool, kindergarten, and school age children. Sociology courses provide a focus beyond the individual - - - to groups, families, cultures, and values.

A thorough curriculum mapping took place within the four departments to analyze specific courses in education, business, sociology and psychology that offered knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for the program. Requiring an area of specialization in addition to the core strengthened the major and tailored the program to each individual student's needs and interests. Because early childhood is a diverse field, we felt students could learn a little about a lot unless they could focus on an area of specialization upon which to build expertise.

Many meetings took place to listen to sociology, business, education, and psychology faculty concerning the essence of their majors and to provide assurance that we would encourage double majors when appropriate. In retrospect, these meetings assured broad-based support for the innovative program. In addition,

those students wishing to earn Pre-kindergarten and/or K-3 certification(s) take additional coursework as their electives for the major. Certification is optional.

By the time the proposal was brought to the curriculum committee, and later to the full faculty for a vote, the cultivated support became apparent. Because of specific colleague -building strategies, top-down support came in a timely manner after the program was outlined. A very unusual "unanimous vote" from the faculty was given for approval for The Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Major. Faculty perceptions were shared stating the authors had designed "a solid program with academic rigor."

After providing handouts with an overview of our program, we will encourage discussion about the critical questions.

Critical Questions:

1. What departments provide strength to support an early childhood development major with Pre-kindergarten certification? How can these department strengths be designed into an early childhood major without also getting in-house wars?

2. How do you begin to forge communication channels with colleagues outside your department?

3. How could a four-year liberal arts college provide a strong foundation and rigor for an early childhood interdisciplinary major with Pre-kindergarten and EEHC certifications?

Challenges

One challenge currently is getting attention; the need for helping students to establish a cohesive identity as Early Childhood majors despite the diversity of their experiences. One possible solution we are currently exploring is to have monthly or bi-monthly meetings with inservices for all Early Childhood majors.

There are two practicum courses with many inservice which could be utilized once or twice each semester to include all faculty and students involved with Early Childhood. Faculty and students involved in the college's new interdisciplinary major in neuroscience use their practicum course as their focal meeting time. This seems to work well for enhancing the cohesiveness of their majors. Another possibility to establish a cohesive identity as Early Childhood majors is to send a quarterly newsletter with student profiles and opportunities for professional involvement. Perhaps those students conducting internships for the Administration area of Specialization would benefit from the experience of designing a newsletter.

We also have not yet fully taken advantage of possible linkages with the Zane Trace Association for the Education of Young Children (ZTAEYC). ZTAEYC is a local affiliate chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The annual ZTAEYC conference and three of its four annual meetings are held at Muskingum College. We need to do more to promote student membership so our students can begin to feel like early childhood professionals. Networking with those already in the field is a valuable learning opportunity. Although many outstanding students enter the college as early childhood majors, too many are transferring to other majors. Perhaps establishing networks will help to encourage the brightest and most committed students to keep working where they are needed --- working with young children.

A second challenge in the new early childhood interdisciplinary major is incorporating new faculty into the program. As new faculty are hired, we need to

keep revisiting our goals and mission for early childhood majors. There are existing structures such as scheduled department meetings to insure communication about departmental majors. However, interdisciplinary majors require an extra commitment from all the departments involved.

Summary

The purpose of this paper was to disseminate the interdisciplinary early childhood major designed by the authors. Early childhood takes into account children from birth to about age eight, and traditionally, programs to train future early childhood professionals primarily have involved the education and psychology departments. This paper presents a new model for small liberal arts colleges to consider in providing training for future early childhood professionals. The authors present an interdisciplinary early childhood major that utilizes those departments typically found on many small liberal arts colleges. The resources and expertise from the departments of business and sociology as well as psychology and education provide the collaborative foundational core and/or areas of specialization suggested by the authors. Some of the features that make this interdisciplinary major attractive for early childhood teacher educators include: 1) departments can provide a valuable body of knowledge and expertise for students earning a degree in early childhood, 2) an interdisciplinary focus in early childhood utilizes existing faculty resources, 3) an area of specialization in addition to the core strengthens the major, and 4) areas of specialization which meet individual student's needs and interests enhance students' motivation and commitment.

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Appendix A

CORE REQUIREMENTS

Education		
EDUC 110	Introduction to Education	3 hrs.
EDUC 112	Issues in Exceptionality and Multiculturalism	3 hrs.
EDUC 240	The Learner and the Processes of Learning	3 hrs.
EDUC 393	Early Childhood Education	4 hrs.
Psychology		
PSYC 101	Introduction to Psychology	3 hrs.
PSYC 205	Child Development	3 hrs.
PSYC 220	Psychology Practicum	2 hrs.
	(1 with Infants/Toddlers and 1 with Preschool)	
PSYC 398/399	Research Internship/Applied Internship	2 hrs.
PSYC 409	Readings in Psychology: Developmentally Appropriate Practices	3 hrs.
Sociology		
SOCI 101	Sociological Perspective	3 hrs.
SOCI 345	Sociology of the Family	3 hrs.
	TOTAL =	32 HOURS

Appendix B

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Choose one of the following areas of concentration or double major in one of the following: Accounting, Business, Economics, Psychology, or Sociology.

Administration (18 hours)

This area of concentration is recommended for students who want to go into child care management or to own their own child care center.

ACCT 201	Financial Accounting	3 hrs.
BUSI 321	Organizational Management	3 hrs.
BUSI 341	Marketing	3 hrs.
ECON 211	Principles of Economics	3 hrs.

Choose one of the following:

ACCT 202	Managerial Accounting	3 hrs.
ECON 212	Principles of Economics	3 hrs.

Take POLS 360, Topic: Public Policy, 3 hrs., as one of the elective courses

Capstone Experience: Complete a 3-credit seminar in Business, Accounting, or Economics.

Human Services Preparation (17 hours)

This area of concentration is recommended for students who want to work in social service agencies.

SOCI 216	Social Problems in Contemporary America	3 hrs.
SOCI 360	Social Research Methods	4 hrs.
SOCI 422	Sociological Theory	3 hrs.

Choose one of the following:

SOCI 320	Racial and Cultural Minorities	3 hrs.
SOCI 410	American Society: Class and Culture	3 hrs.

It is recommended that students complete their required 2 credit-hour internship (PSYC 399) in a social service agency that serves young children.

Capstone Experience: Complete two 2-credit Senior Studies in Sociology

Child Development Research (16 hours)

This area of concentration is recommended for students who want to go to graduate school in Child Development.

PSYC 151	General Experimental Psychology	4 hrs.
PSYC 232	Behavioral Statistics	4 hrs.

Choose one additional psychology course from the list of electives.

It is recommended that students complete a research internship (PSYC 398) as their required 2 credit-hour internship. They do a research project that studies some aspect of children's development.

Capstone Experience: Complete 2-credit course Comprehensive Review and the 2-credit course Senior Studies in Psychology.

Appendix C

ELECTIVES

Electives (6-9 hours or a double major in Education, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Business, or Accounting or Teacher Certification for Pre-K hours)

MACS 100	Introduction to Computer	3 hrs.
PHED 310	First Aid and Adapted Physical Education	3 hrs.
PHED 320	Elementary School Health and Phys. Educ.	3 hrs.
POLS 360	Topics: Public Policy	3 hrs.
POLS 360	Topics: Public Administration	3 hrs.
POLS 361	Topics: Urban Politics	3 hrs.
PSYC 251	Advanced Experimental Psychology	4 hrs.
PSYC 305	Cognitive Psychology	4 hrs.
PSYC 307	Learning and Motivation	4 hrs.
PSYC 359	Psychological Testing	4 hrs.
SOCI 303	Mind and Human Interaction	3 hrs.
SOCI 410	Sociology of Education	3 hrs.
SPCO 105	Fundamentals of Speech Communication	3 hrs.
SPCO 345	Interviewing	3 hrs.

Optional Teacher Certification (16 hours)

Students who want to become certified to teach Pre-K take these courses instead of electives.

ART 380	Art Education	2 hrs.
EDUC 310	Principles of Curriculum and Instruction	3 hrs.
MUSC 385	Music in the Elementary School	2 hrs.
EDUC 423	Children's Literature and Language Arts	4 hrs.
EDUC 449	Primary Student Teaching (K placement)	5 hrs.

To become certified for teaching Kindergarten to 3rd Grade, add the following courses:

EDUC 335	Principles of Instructional Technology	1 hr.
EDUC 380	Teaching Science and Social Studies in the Elementary School	4 hrs.
EDUC 381	Teaching Mathematics in the Elementary School	4 hrs.
EDUC 422	Teaching Reading in the Elementary School	4 hrs.
EDUC 449	Primary Student Teaching (1st-3rd placement)	5 hrs.